

GORBACHEV WARNS LITHUANIA OF BAN ON MAJOR SUPPLIES

WANTS NEW LAWS KILLED

Sets a Two-Day Deadline, but Aides in the Baltic State Say It Can't Be Met

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MOSCOW, April 13 — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev issued an ultimatum to Lithuania today, saying that if the republic does not rescind its strongest independence measures within 48 hours, he will order other republics to start cutting off needed supplies.

In his harshest attempt at pressure so far, the Soviet leader warned the rebellious republic that its independence campaign had degenerated into "an ever tighter knot, assuming the nature of a political dead end."

"Other constituent republics are asking quite aptly why they should continue supplying products to Lithuania at the expense of their own needs," he declared in a letter to the leaders of the Lithuanian government, which declared its independence on March 11 in 1990. [Text of the letter, page 4.]

Fear of a Precedent

Mr. Gorbachev's letter was his strongest turning of the screw in the slow war of nerves that the national Government has been waging in its attempt to keep the Lithuanian rebellion from becoming a precedent for other dissatisfied republics to challenge Moscow's sovereignty.

Lithuania's initial reaction was unyielding, with officials saying the two-day ultimatum was intended to prove impossible to satisfy since it covers the Easter weekend in the heavily Roman Catholic republic. "Over these two days we will not do anything special," said the Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, the Lithuanian information office reported.

[President Bush and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain, meeting in Hamilton, Bermuda, said reports of the Kremlin ultimatum were deeply disturbing. "Now is no time for escalation," Mr. Bush said. "It's time for talks." Page 4.]

No Explicit Declaration

Mr. Gorbachev's warning did not explicitly say that Lithuania should revoke its declaration of independence, although it did say that "we are looking to" the Lithuanian authorities to restore the republic's status to what it was the day before independence was declared.

Instead of demanding revocation of the declaration, the ultimatum said that unless Lithuania rescinded new laws that would establish citizen identity cards, challenge the Communist Party's right to certain properties and reject the Soviet military draft, Mr. Gorbachev would instruct other republics to stop supplying "those categories of products that are sold on external

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markets for freely convertible currency."

The description was a virtual definition of petroleum and natural gas supplies, which Lithuania lacks as a natural resource, and would also appear to include raw materials and machinery spare parts needed for Lithuania's industry. Such a supply blockade, if enacted, would probably be felt quickly in the republic, where Lithuanians already have been anxious over possible shortages of gasoline.

Lithuania's economy is strongly agricultural, with increasingly important light industry. The republic has one nuclear power plant, which many Lithuanians have bitterly criticized as a threat to the environment.

In his latest tactic against what he calls the republic's unconstitutional move to leave the Soviet Union, Mr. Gorbachev stressed Lithuania's growing isolation both in the nation and in

the world. Other nations have followed the lead of the United States in declining to grant recognition to the republic, one of the three independent Baltic nations that were forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union 50 years ago under a secret protocol to a nonaggression pact between Stalin and Hitler.

This week, Mr. Gorbachev was quoted as offering personal assurances to concerned British officials that supplies of "necessary materials" to Lithuania would continue.

The British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, said one of Mr. Gorbachev's clear points in a meeting on Tuesday was that "a decision had been taken not to interrupt the flow of necessary materials to Lithuania."

Pressure From Other Republics

But the Soviet leader stressed the pressure he is feeling from other Soviet republics over Lithuania's defiance of his repeated demand that the Vilnius government retract its declaration of independence.

"This would make it possible to begin

Soviet pressure reaches its harshest level yet.

dealing with the entire package of issues without delay," Mr. Gorbachev declared in his latest warning, in which he again offered the path of secession as described by the Soviet Government as a better means to greater Lithuanian sovereignty.

The Lithuanian leadership maintains that the issue of secession is irrelevant because the republic is reclaiming independence never legally surrendered to Moscow in the first place.

The Soviet ultimatum came a day after Lithuania joined the other Baltic republics, Estonia and Latvia, in announcing that they would form their own "common market" to work for

greater economic independence. The other two republics have been moving at a firm but somewhat slower pace toward enacting independence.

Mr. Gorbachev charged that the current crisis had been "artificially and illicitly provoked" by the Lithuanian executive and Parliament, which has passed a series of independence measures in the four weeks since the independence declaration.

Rights of Minority Cited

"Such actions, the list of which continues, can no longer be tolerated," he said. "They aim to undermine political and social-economic stability in the country, damage democratic processes, and seriously infringe on Soviet citizens' rights."

The last reference was to the Kremlin's contention that the Lithuanian majority is intent on diminishing the rights of minority groups in the republic, where people of Lithuanian heritage make up about 80 percent of the

Frustrated by slow payments by the usually prompt Soviets, some American companies are reportedly slowing shipments to Moscow. Business Day, page 29.

population and Russians and Poles are in the minority. Vilnius officials deny the Kremlin's accusation.

Lithuanians say the main sources of tension in the republic have been the demonstrative troop movements and building seizures by the Soviet military ordered by the Kremlin, which also has banned foreign correspondents from the republic as part of its attempt at an anti-Lithuanian propaganda campaign.

"We could have expected worse," President Landsbergis's office quoted him as saying, adding that he estimated that any cutoff of goods would be gradual, not sudden.

"If Moscow will demand hard currency for those products, that will mean Moscow considers us a foreign state," he said, ignoring the ultimatum's declaration that the goods would be stopped outright, not subject of renegotiation.

May Seek Supplies in West

Lithuanian officials have said that if Moscow tries to apply economic pressure, they will appeal to the United States and other democracies for supplies.

Vilnius officials have contended that other Soviet regions might suffer serious losses of the republic's dairy products and military electronic parts, if the sovereignty crisis reaches the point of economic sanctions. But the Soviet Union has far more alternative sources for such products than Lithuania has sources for fuel.

The republic's chief industrial products include paper, plastics, chemicals, textiles, fertilizers, televisions, bicycles and some heavy machinery for factories. Agricultural products are grain, potatoes, vegetables, sugar beets, meat, milk and eggs.

Lithuania's needs as an independent republic would be greater, as well, for hard currency reserves to deal with outside suppliers. In recent weeks there have been rumors that strictly hard-currency, non-ruble payments for product deliveries are being increasingly demanded of Lithuania, even from some enterprises in the other Baltic republics.

Text of Kremlin's Letter of Warning to the Lithuanians

MOSCOW, April 13 (AP) — Following is the text of a letter to the Lithuanian leadership sent today by President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and Prime Minister Nikolai I. Ryzhkov, as translated by Tass, the official Soviet press agency:

Artificially and illicitly provoked by the Lithuanian leadership, the issue of the republic's position in the federal state tightens into an ever tighter knot, assuming the nature of a political dead end.

Despite constructive and well-considered measures by the supreme bodies of state authority of the U.S.S.R., which would enhance Lithuanian sovereignty within the constitutional framework, the republic's leadership continues to adopt legislative acts and decisions that set Lithuania in opposition to other republics and the Soviet Union as a whole.

On April 5, for instance, a law was adopted "on identity cards for citizens of the Lithuanian republic" that discriminates against Soviet citizens who are willing to live and work in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the U.S.S.R.

The Lithuanian Supreme Soviet's decision to halt spring conscription activities in the republic is a flagrant violation of the U.S.S.R. law on general military service.

Supply of Products

Contrary to the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers' resolution "on measures to protect the property of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on the territory of the Lithuanian S.S.R.," republican authorities are making illegitimate attempts to seize this property.

Such actions, the list of which continues, can no longer be tolerated. They aim to undermine political and socioeconomic stability in the country, damage democratic processes and seriously infringe on Soviet citizens' rights.

Other constituent republics are asking quite aptly why they should continue supplying products to Lithuania at the expense of their own needs while the latter's steering agencies continue their anti-constitutional actions and disregard the rightful interests of the integral national economy and the country's citizens.

In this situation, we are compelled to issue the following warning:

A 2-Day Deadline

If the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian S.S.R. do not rescind the above decisions within the next two days, instructions will be given to stop supplies to the Lithuanian S.S.R. from other constituent republics of those categories of products that are sold on external markets for freely convertible currency.

We do not want things to go as far as this measure, but the situation now fully depends on the Lithuanian leadership.

At the same time, we reaffirm once again that we are looking to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers to take decisions that will restore the republic's position to that of March 10, 1990. This would make it possible to begin dealing with the entire package of issues without delay.